



METROPOLITAN
COUNCIL ON HOUSING

215 West 23rd Street, New York 11, N.Y.

TENANT NEWS

ATTENDANCE AT 4TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE BREAKS RECORD

223 DELEGATES FILL SESSIONS,..... PARTICIPATE IN LIVELY DEBATES

The Plenary Session gathers late Saturday afternoon, Nov. 17, to hear panel reports. 223 delegates were in attendance, from 64 organizations, including tenant councils, political clubs, unions and civic groups. All sessions were held at the McBurney YMCA, 215 West 23rd Street.



The lady in the hat is Frances Goldin, reporting from the panel on "Must Community Rebuilding Mean People Clearance?" At the Plenary Session the audience and the Conference committee began to realize that time was running short and we had

tried to do a lot in a little time. We apologize for the jamup. There will be further opportunity for discussion and planning for action at Roundtable Meetings soon to be announced. A conference report will be issued including resolutions adopted.

Richard Stein speaks at the Symposium on "Human Values for Housing Design" which kicked-off the 4th Annual Conference on Friday, Nov. 16th. Others (left to right) are Max Wechsler, architect who offered a novel plan for moving streets instead of people, Elizabeth Niehyl, moderator Raymond Rubinow, and William Conklin. John Maylott, Percival Goodman and Elias Lasberg were out of camera range. The mike belongs to WHAI which was taping the proceedings.



These thoughtful faces are the panel speakers on "The City Rent Control Law," one of four panels during the Saturday, Nov. 17 session. In the picture are Minnie Kalmis, Assemblyman Mark Lane, Lester Evens, Esther T. Rand, chairman William Stanley, Petra Rossa, and Hy Bershad. Councilman Robert Low was at the end of the table. Other panels were held on community rebuilding, public housing, and discrimination in housing (see page 3 of this issue of TENANT NEWS).



MET COUNCIL DIARY

The Metropolitan Council on Housing was invited to give testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Problems of Dislocation Among the Aging at a hearing held on October 26th in Newark. Jane Benedict, Petra L. Rosa and Esther T. Rand represented the Met Council at the hearing which was chaired by Senator Harrison Williams.

They eloquently told of the hardships suffered by the aging where relocation was involved, whether by private construction or by public agencies and pointed out that New York City's increasing volume of relocation was affecting an increasing number of aged persons.

Elderly Suffer

Miss Benedict stressed the hardships on elderly people, because they are on fixed incomes; because they are emotionally attached to their homes, their neighbors, friends and religious institutions in the community; because invariably relocation causes higher rents which they cannot meet; and because of the physical hardship of seeking a new home and then moving.

Small Businessmen

The West Side Urban Renewal Area was referred to in Mrs. Rosa's testimony. There small businessmen who are elderly find it impossible to start new businesses.

A Better Way

Mrs. Rand described relocation from the FDR public housing site, where hundreds of old people were forced to move away from their old friends and neighbors. She contrasted this type of drastic relocation with the Alternate Plan for Cooper Square which offers housing for all site tenants within the community with a minimum of displacement.

Copies of Met Council testimony are available on request.

SPOTLIGHT ON HARLEM TENANTS COUNCIL

"Trade union members make good fighters," reports William Stanley, militant leader of the Harlem Tenants Council.

And these "good fighters" along with working mothers and other hundreds of tenants in the Harlem area have won many battles against their slumlords.

Pointing out that it is very difficult for working mothers to take time off to go to court, the Harlem leader remarked that "you'd be surprised what wonderful witnesses children can make." Yes! The Harlem Tenants Council has gone to court on a tenant's behalf and scored a victory with the testimony of a youngster substituting for a parent.

The Harlem Tenants Council's 12 years of experience has made it a smoothly running, effective organization widely known throughout the Harlem area.

Tenants Fight and Win

A recent victory was scored by the tenants in three buildings on West 154th St. After a difficult nine-month struggle, during which the ownership of the buildings changed twice, the tenants were awarded a 25% decrease in rent.

Open daily from 1 to 7 p.m. and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., at 306 Lenox Avenue, the Council operates a rent clinic which has organized many houses.

House Meetings

Each organized house holds a "house meeting" once a month in a member's home. "We find people stay more active," Mr. Stanley said, "when they work in their own houses."

But the well-organized membership of the Harlem Tenants Council doesn't always stay at home. Harlem is always well-represented on Met Council's delegations or on picketlines.



Speakers and audience work hard to hammer out a "Program to End Discrimination in Housing" at the Sat., Nov. 17th session of the 4th Annual Conference of the Met Council. Around the table, left to right: Meryl Lewis (back to camera), Efrain Rosa (partially hidden), Genoveva Clemente, chairman Jacob Volkman, Richard Levenson, and Brett Warren,



NAACP President Percy Sutton was unable to attend as scheduled because of an emergency.

The younger generation looks as if he is relaxing from the serious deliberations. Let us work so that he can live in a world finally free of discrimination, a world of peace and brotherhood.

LEGISLATIVELY SPEAKING

by *Frances Goldin*

The panel to "End Discrimination in Housing" at the 4th Annual Conference of the Met Council proposed five changes in the law guiding the Commission on Human Rights:

1. An enlarged legal department which could act to secure injunctions without having to delay by working through the Corporation Counsel's office.
2. In specific and appropriate cases, the Commission could dispense with the conciliation procedure and move for an injunction immediately.
3. The Commission should have the right, by administrative order, to hold an apartment vacant for a month, after a complaint of discrimination. If the landlord violates the order, and the charge is upheld, he would be fined not less than \$1000 and not more than \$5,000.
4. Commission staff should be increased and decentralized with offices throughout the City, in order to respond effectively to neighborhood complaints.

5. The number of Commissioners should be reduced and they should be full-time, salaried officials.

These proposals would put teeth in the law and make the work of the Commission more effective. In addition to the legal changes, the Commission needs to adopt an all-out uncompromising approach to ending discrimination. The influence on the Commission of groups such as ours can be invaluable in impressing them with the need for dedicated and swift action.

The evils of discrimination in housing are deep-rooted. Landlords and brokers have devised countless and insidious practices to perpetuate this evil. The mere creation of the Commission on Human Rights cannot break through the wall of bigotry which exists. Only by the determined and forceful administration of the law in support of democracy and dignity of man can "the walls come tumbling down."

The panel also proposed that a stronger State fair housing law be the focus of the 1963 Met Council lobby to Albany. State legislation now covers only 15% of the housing in the state.

REGULATIONS CHALLENGED

A group of 6th Avenue tenants faced with eviction have charged that the new Rent Administration regulations covering demolition evictions are worse than ever.

The tenants have begun legal action to change the regulations, claiming that the regulations deny them the right to effectively fight eviction proceedings. Legal counsel for the tenants are Richard L. Levenson and Lester Evens, both of the Met Council's Law Committee.

Under the new regulations the Rent Administration first determines whether the landlord has complied with its requirements as to finances and plans. Then the tenant must decide whether or not to accept a relocation offer. If the tenant wants to protest the eviction certificate, he must reject the relocation offer. Then if he eventually loses and faces eviction, -- he is no longer entitled to relocation.

"The new regulations dealing with relocation procedures have been found by many tenants to create even greater hardship than did the regulations under the State Rent Law," Mr. Levenson commented. "Under the present law the tenant who is convinced that the landlord's

application is without basis must choose between giving up the fight and accepting relocation -- or contesting the eviction and possibly waiving relocation if the appeal is not sustained."

PROJECT TENANTS UNITE

Tenants associations in public housing projects all over the City have united recently to form the City-wide Council of Project Tenants Associations. This represents the first joint effort of public housing tenants in many years.

One of their first requests is the assignment of a housing guard to each building for one daily shift without rent increase.

They have also asked that the Housing Authority meet with the united group just as it meets with individual project associations. The City-wide Council feels that their common problems can be discussed better jointly.

A demonstration was held in front of the Housing Authority's offices on Nov. 30th to back up these demands.

Met Council has been cooperating with the City-wide Council in hopes of breaking down the artificial separation between tenants in public and private housing.

THE METROPOLITAN COUNCIL ON HOUSING welcomes the support of every organization and individual interested in "decent housing at rentals people can afford." Yearly membership is \$10 for organizations; \$5 for individuals. You may join by signing this address label ---- and sending it with membership fee to Met Council on Housing, 215 West 23 St.

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